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AN ADVENTURE IN THE WILDS OF ROSS-SHIRE.

Most persons who speak of the Highlands of Scotland are thinking of Perthshire with its Trosachs, Taymouth, and Dunkeld, or at the utmost, of Inverness-shire and the Caledonian Canal, which places they may perchance have visited through the help of steamers, coaches, and droskies. These are familiar districts of Great Britain; but there are wilds beyond, which few penetrate—the vast sterile tracts of Western Ross and Sutherlandshire. Besides the English sportsmen whose enthusiasm carries them wherever a wing or a fin is to be seen, few know aught of that region beyond what they may have learned from a casual and indifferent glance at a map. Yet it is the district in which perhaps absolute wildness is the best exemplified in our island. Mountains most grand, inlets deeply intersecting the land, lovely lakes, and wide-stretching moorlands, mingle to form a haunt, one would think, for only the eagle and the roe-deer, but which, nevertheless, contains a large population of sheep and cattle, and also many human beings; more of the latter, indeed, than it is desirable to see in such a situation. The population, however, is in patches, generally where a mountain-skirt of green land is to be found. In many parts you may wander for a whole day and not meet a single person, or see the smoke of a cottage.

Led by curiosity respecting a point in physical geography, or I might more aptly say, superficial geology, I lately found my way past all the usual haunts of the Highland tourist. Loch Alsh and Loch Carron I had left behind as comparatively Lowland and southern districts. A mail car brought me to the head of Loch Maree, and there left me at the extremity, as it were, of civilisation; for it went no farther. Then I passed along the border of Loch Maree by a road only made last year out of the 'Destitution Fund.' A splendid lake it is, bordered by magnificent storm-scarped mountains, the lower regions of which presented me with what I felt to be the first purely natural wood of a picturesque character I had ever seen; and how admirable a thing is such natural wood! So harmonious with the scenery, so just enough and no more, so feathery, so well arranged—I never can again look on a 'plantation' with any patience! Then I came to Gareloch, which is part of the same range of beautiful country. Then to Polewe—a lonely village where fishing is carried on, and where I was induced to have recourse to a boat in order to get farther north. My boat adventure was in itself an odd one; but I must not dwell upon it. Suffice it to state that I was becalmed at sunset on the western ocean, and spent

most of the night in Loch Broom, not reaching Ullapool till four in the morning.

I was now where I had desired to be—in the midst of a range of mountains which has heretofore engaged a good deal of the attention of geologists, on account of the very peculiar circumstances which have evidently attended their formation. From Quennaig in Sutherlandshire, southward, to Applecross in Ross-shire—a space of seventy or eighty miles—this line of mountains extends, each standing wholly apart, and very much separated also from any eminences in the general plateau from which they spring, most of them bold and narrow towards the west and north-west, and more sloping in the opposite direction, and all of them reaching to a height of from 2500 to 3500 feet above the level of the sea. Now the remarkable fact regarding these mountains is, that they are composed of sandstone strata, arranged horizontally, or at a slight inclination to the horizon, so that in their sides and ends they bear the appearance of a Titanic masonry, and one could almost imagine some of them to be enormous cathedrals or castles crumbling into ruin. It is perfectly evident that they are the relics of a sheet of what is called the Old Red Sandstone, which has originally extended over the same space of ground, and all the rest of which has been swept away. It is accordingly a magnificently significant and readily intelligible example of that process known by geologists under the term, *denudation*. The hills are hills of denudation, and the intermediate spaces are valleys of denudation. The most unreflecting pursuer of grouse must be struck by the extraordinary appearances which are thus presented to him. One such person told me that, on first approaching the base of Sool Vein in Assynt, he could hardly resist the belief that he saw before him a lofty building of regular courses of masonry, which had been erected by the hands of some aboriginal race of giants long passed from the earth. Sool Vein rises from a platform of gneiss to a height of nearly 2000 feet, and, in its forested form from the west, I can compare it to nothing but an exaggeration of the Bell-Rock Lighthouse, which narrows from the base to about a third part up the sides, then becomes perpendicular, and ends in a dome-shaped cap.

Near Ullapool there is a grand example of these sandstone mountains, bearing the name of Benmore or the Great Mountain; but as this name is common in the Highlands, it is further distinguished from the district in which it lies as Benmore-Coygath.* One sees it

* This mountain is in a district which politically forms part of Cromartyshire, though detached from the principal part of that county; but in physical geography it may well be considered as part of Western Ross-shire.

rising in a long-extended screen of dark frowning precipice over certain intervening ranges of gray and sterile rock. Having resolved to make an inspection of the mountain, I took a pony to carry me over the six miles intervening between the village and its base. A young man came along with me to take charge of the pony while I should be upon the hill, and I also provided myself with a couple of biscuits and a small quantity of spirits. For my original intention of spending three or four hours on the hill, and then returning to Ullapool to a late dinner, this arrangement would have been sufficient; but I afterwards found that both a guide and a larger stock of provisions would have been necessary. Leaving the pony and its attendant at a shepherd's house near the base of the hill, I commenced ascending at one o'clock, and quickly overmastered some of the frontier ridges, though they were somewhat more troublesome than I had expected. While sheltering myself for a few minutes under a rock from a passing shower, I found myself in close proximity to a ewe which was standing with a gentle watchfulness beside her dead lamb. The little creature had probably fallen from the overhanging cliff and been killed. I thought of the beautiful allusion to such an incident in Scott's poem of 'Helvellyn,' but without imagining that before night I was to run nigh to repeat in my own person the history of the subject of that poem. In the wilderness such little circumstances evoke sympathies for which there appears to be no place amidst the busy haunts of men. Sometimes in clambering along these pathless highlands, where one might almost forget that there is a populous world to be returned to, I have been surprised at the appeal made by even a little wild-flower, when, resting for a moment, the wanderer sees such an object by his side. The wild violet, perhaps, or the harebell—ten thousand chances to one against its ever being seen by human eyes, yet not the less beautiful in consideration of that slight expectancy—not the less exemplifying the wondrous skill of the Maker of the great and the small. The well-known lines of Gray are of course apt to occur at such a sight; but I must confess that my predominant feeling is one of deep interest in the contemplation of the mechanism and business of *life* going on in circumstances which so strikingly mark its independent place in creation. The humblest wild-flower blooms not for man or any other creature as a primary object: it lives and blossoms for itself under the God who made it.

On getting to the rear of the mountain, I soon found myself descending into a deep valley in which lay a series of lakes, and the opposite side of which was formed by an isolated hill of no marked character. I had to descend a precipitous hollow, or *corry*, as it is called in the Highlands, often indebted for progress to the rough heather which grew from the interstices of the rocks. It is a scene of utter desolation; yet here was something which science rendered to me as eloquent as any written history. Curving outwards from the front of the hollow through which I had descended were two great ramparts or ridges of loose stones, one smaller than and within the other. Some acquaintance with the Swiss Alps enabled me at once to detect that these were *moraines*—examples, namely, of the bands of debris which glaciers bring down from the mountains, and leave encircling their own terminations. The climate is not such now as to produce a glacier in the *corry* which I have described, but it

had once been so; and here were the loads of rubbish which that glacier had deposited at its skirts—first the outer and larger being for a long period its limit, and then for a shorter period the inner and smaller. Such curious memorials of a past state of things are to be found in various parts of the Highlands; but they are not common.

Under the impulse of curiosity I extended my walk round the isolated hill, and then began to cross back through the valley, intending to shorten my walk by passing over the ridge of Benmore at one of its lowest points, and so returning to the shepherd's house. But I had now expended a considerable portion of my strength, and its renewal was not to be looked for, as by this time my stock of provisions had been exhausted. To ascend, therefore, a rough steep *corry* of about eight hundred feet in height was a severe task. With dreadful toil, and after many pauses, I did attain the summit, when to my surprise, instead of looking down the other side of a ridge as I had expected, I found myself on a table-land of heath and moss, over which the wind swept with unobstructed keenness. It was like one of those strange transitions effected by magic in the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments, and for some time I was totally unable to account for it. At length I apprehended that Benmore, instead of being one simple ridge, is a triangular piece of table-land with two precipitous fronts. I swiftly traversed the upland moor, and bending towards the left, came in about half an hour to the brink of what I believed to be the opposite precipice, although in the scenery below I vainly endeavoured to recognise the country which I had left at mid-day. With great difficulty I descended a rough *corry* for four or five hundred feet, and then became aware that I had made a mistake, and was only returning to the valley at the back of the hill. It was now between six and seven o'clock, and my strength was much diminished; yet as there was nothing else to depend upon for getting home, an exertion must be made. With incredible pain I reascended the mountain, and was once more upon the table-land, the form of which, by the aid of my pocket compass, I now understood. Feeling unfit to encounter any more ascents, I declined an adjacent hollow in the summit which might have given a straighter way home, and walked for about a couple of miles along the moor in order to turn the flank of the mountain; thus at length completing my original design. At that point there was a splendid look-out upon the outer portions of Loch Broom and its many islands, over which the sun was beginning to go down; but no habitation met my eye: I had still the sense of being far from human aid and succour. There was in view, indeed, a portion of the bay beside which I remembered the shepherd's house was situated, but it was evidently some miles distant; and behold the intervening country was composed of huge longitudinal hills, only inferior to the mighty Benmore itself—a circumstance for which I was totally unprepared, as I had not thought that these ridges extended so far. I may here mention, that during the whole day I had never met or caught a glimpse of any human being. The district is merely a sheep-walk, over which it is not possible for even the shepherds to pass very frequently, and I think I was told that, for some particular reason, none of them had that day been abroad upon the hill.

I now began to feel that the circumstances were of a critical nature, and repented the imprudence of venturing alone and so ill-provided into such a desert. But for these uncomfortable reflections, the situation was one well calculated to excite admiration. I was now on the talus of debris under the black seamy cliffs of the finest side of this stupendous mountain. It stretched for several miles along, a grand bulwark of nature, marked with the tear and wear of elemental wars during numberless ages. In front lay a long gray hill, the surface of which was composed of large sheets of

smooth abraded rock, interspersed with a meagre vegetation. In the distance lay Ben Goolish and the other mountains of the two Loch Brooms, a scene of unbroken sterility and grandeur; while it was just possible in the middle ground to obtain a peep of the softer scenery around that bay to which I would so fain have returned. For some time I passed along the sheep-tracks on the face of the mountain, descending occasionally from one to another, till at length it occurred to me that I might fail to surmount the frontier hills, and that it was best to try to turn their flanks by keeping near the sea. I therefore left the front of Benmore proper, and, crossing the stream in the trough or valley below, passed obliquely up the opposite ridge. In due time I came to the extremity near the sea, but found it appallingly steep and apparently impassable. I was on the verge of a precipice, all but impending over the restless element, which, even on this comparatively calm night, kept up a continual roar below. In the state of exhaustion to which I was reduced, and the desperate aspect which the case was assuming, I felt for a moment that to have fallen over these cliffs and been at rest in the bosom of the deep would have been less of a calamity than such an event usually appears. At this crisis, however, a ray of hope shone forth, for I espied a small footpath passing along the face of the cliff underneath. A footpath must lead from one human haunt to another. In one direction it would probably take me to the shepherd's hut.

By this time it was half-past eight o'clock, and I felt an attenuation and languor not to be described. It may here be explained that walking over such a district is a very different kind of exertion from that of promenading in a street or a country road. From the roughness of the ground, it is necessary to leap, to clamber, to slide, and thus the whole system is strained and shaken to a degree which in a few hours tells severely upon it. Under such violent exercise, perspiration streams from the body, and drops from the hair and eyebrows. Having now been in this state for several hours, with a superaddition of excitement arising from anxiety, I felt as on the borders of a fever. What helped to strengthen this impression was the raging thirst which I experienced. At every one of the numerous rills of pure water which crossed my path, I took two or three handfuls, and yet the drought was never in the least quenched. I recollect at that time collecting a few crumbs from my satchell and trying to eat them, when it appeared as if the salivary glands had been utterly dried up, for the bolus remained dry and unswallowable in my mouth until I obtained a little water to slake it.

By doubling back a little way—how hard a doubling back appears at such a time!—I reached the footpath, which proved one of fearful difficulty, sometimes passing up little precipices, sometimes crossing little morasses, almost always ascending, for it soon appeared that much high ground was still to be passed over. I was now able to walk only forty or fifty yards at a time. At the end of every such space, I lay down, or involuntarily tumbled down on the heath, and remained there a few minutes to recover breath and strength. Twice or thrice a flash of sleep, as I may call it, passed over my exhausted powers, each having its little momentary dream; a phenomenon very interesting, but also very alarming, as to have fallen completely asleep in such circumstances would probably have been fatal. I remember reflecting at one of those intervals of rest, of what value would have been a bottle of wine and a biscuit—how much even a bowl of milk would have been worth! I felt too that, if a bottle of wine could have been obtained, the first impulse of nature would have been to drink it off at one draught. Some large portion of one's entire means in life might willingly have been rendered for one of those

refreshing succours. It is when thus thrown forth from the social scene, and left exposed to the merciless energies of physical nature, that man feels how weak he absolutely is, and how, without some ultimate trust in the Almighty source of his being, that being is but as a straw upon a whirlpool. I am unwilling to treat my adventure in an exaggerating spirit; it was, after all, perhaps, only remarkable as an unusual occurrence in the life of one accustomed to dwell amidst the comforts of the highest civilisation. But since I am relating it to all, I feel that I ought not to suppress some reference to the solemn feelings which passed through my breast while running what I believed to be a risk of tragical death.

The adventure occurring near the summer solstice, and in the fifty-eighth parallel of latitude, the sun fortunately kept above the horizon till about nine o'clock. At a different season of the year, darkness supervening at an earlier hour, I certainly could not have escaped. It was now past nine, and the light was beginning to wane—an addition of no small magnitude to my anxieties, but at the same time a stimulus to the jaded faculties. It was at this time that, casting my eyes over the gray rocks everywhere surrounding me, a curious deception of vision for a moment occurred. Methought I saw two human figures standing motionless on the hill above me. They seemed like a man and his wife, and appeared to gaze calmly down upon me. It was but for a moment that this appearance lasted; but it was vivid enough to make me renew my gaze at the spot, to ascertain if there really were any living beings so near me. In the excited feeling of the moment, my mind reverted to superstitious tales which speak of the spirits of those who may be presumed to feel the greatest interest in us, making an appearance before us at times of extraordinary peril. On a searching examination of the spot, it quickly appeared that the figures were merely the effect of some peculiar form and colouring of the cliffs. The footpath, after being twice or thrice lost in bogs of fresh vegetation, or over crags where I failed to mark its course, became finally untraceable, and I had then to move as I best could over ground encumbered with large blocks and masses of moss, guided only by my general sense of the form of the country. I thought I could not then be far from the desired place of rest, but feared to believe it, knowing how apt a stranger is to be deceived in his estimates of a hitherto untrodden district. At length, on succeeding with great difficulty in surmounting a considerable steep, I attained the face of the hill, whence I could see the shepherd's house below. My troubles were at an end. I reached the door of that humble mansion at precisely ten o'clock, having been engaged in violent exercise, without adequate support to the system, for fully nine hours.

I found that the man had gone home with the pony in despair of my taking that mode of returning; but the shepherd and his wife proved as ministering angels. They gave me food and rest, with every demonstration of sympathising kindness, and sent me home to Ullapool next morning greatly recruited, though I did not feel quite recovered for three days. My worthy hosts at the village had been in such concern for me, that she was about to have had a search instituted, when fortunately my reappearance saved her the trouble.

Some years ago, when rambling with a few geological friends in North Wales, I used to join in the laugh at the Snowdon guides, who were sure to ply you with what they called 'frightful examples' of the danger of ascending that mountain without a guide. But I begin to think that frightful examples are not quite to be laughed at. I am also beginning to suspect that geology is a somewhat rough study for a gentleman on the borders of fifty, and that I must leave it to younger men, and look with more respect upon the quiet walk or safe fireside. There must first, however, be some

explication of the discoveries which this and similar rambles have enabled me to make respecting an agent which has powerfully affected the face of the earth in former times.

R. C.

A WORD ON PIANOFORTES.

THE pianoforte is the most popular musical instrument of the day. The facility with which a very respectable amount of skill in performing upon it may be attained, and its admirable adaptation for an accompaniment to the human voice, have contributed to render it a general favourite. It is to be regretted, however, that much ignorance prevails with regard to the constitution of a piece of mechanism now so generally to be met with in our domestic circles, and that so little caution or judgment is exercised in the selection, and so little care in the treatment of it. From what we observe in the houses of our friends and neighbours, or wherever we go to enjoy a musical treat, we see that information on the subject is almost universally wanting, and that a serious waste of money is continually occurring from heedless precipitancy in the purchase and subsequent neglect in the treatment of pianofortes. With the view of obviating these evils, in some degree at least, the following few facts and suggestions are submitted to the consideration of all whom they may concern.

And first, as to the choice of an instrument for family use. There is no question that the grand piano, both in regard to durability and power, is at present the most perfect form of the instrument. Taking into consideration the actual cost of manufacture, it ought also to be relatively the cheapest, instead of being, as it is, the dearest instrument. The high price, with the shamefully enormous profits it includes, is only maintained through the limited demand—a demand which is never likely to become very general, owing to want of space in our dwellings for the convenient stowage of a mass pre-eminently unwieldy and unsightly, notwithstanding all the artistic talent that has been put in requisition for its ornamentation. The upright piano, under which term may be included all sizes, from the tall cabinet to the dwarf piccolo, is fast superseding both the grand and the square for family use; and in consequence of the increased demand, more improvements have been made in the manufacture of instruments of this description than in any others. But whatever description of instrument may be chosen, considerable caution is necessary, especially if economy is to be kept in view, in making the purchase. There are certain well-known names which have stood high in the profession for many years, and if the intending purchaser have not sufficient judgment of his own, and no friend upon whose judgment he can rely, he cannot do very wrong in purchasing of one of these long-established firms, with whom it may be said with some degree of truth, that a bad instrument is the exception, and not the rule. But in this case he will inevitably pay for his own satisfaction the price which the makers set upon their reputation, *plus* the value of the instrument. But it is by no means the case that all the skill in the manufacture of pianofortes is monopolised by the great names. Admirable instruments are daily put forth by men of small repute, quite equal in all imaginable respects to those of the most renowned manufacturers, and which may be bought by those who have skill to select at a fair and reasonable price, yet yielding a good profit to the makers.

As a general rule, a piano for family use should be one of the simplest construction. If it be constructed on sound mechanical principles, it ought to be strong enough to bear the tension of a good thick wire throughout, without the cumbrous addition of steel bars and plates of metal, and hollow copper tubes, such

additions being for the most part nothing better than so many costly catchpennies, which serve the double purpose of enhancing the price of the article and cloaking the ignorance of the manufacturer, who is not unfrequently driven to have recourse to them from a deficiency in knowledge of the true principles of his art. For domestic use a piano of moderately crisp touch is to be preferred—not one offering no resistance to the finger, by the use of which a slovenly and ineffective style of performance would be engendered, nor one on the other hand that demands a momentum of five or six pounds per key to elicit the full force of the note. The present practice of banging upon the key-board with a vigour which would astonish a pauper engaged in the comparatively easy occupation of breaking stones upon the road, has compelled the manufacturers to protect the reputation of their instruments by mechanically diminishing, by the operation of various contrivances, the momentum of the hammer which strikes the string. A 'brilliant finger' is no longer the desideratum with a performer it once was; the united force of arms and shoulders is brought into play; the rigidly distended digits are displayed aloft and dashed down upon the keys with a savage furor altogether out of keeping with the sentiment of music and song; and all the while the enthusiastic performer imagines that by the display of such antics, and the cost of so much perspiration, he is eliciting the fine qualities of his instrument, and never dreaming that his superfluous labour is wasted in overcoming the resistance of so much lead or leverage, which the manufacturer has erected as a barrier to his destructive propensities. How far this senseless system is to be carried there is no saying, or whether it will be thought necessary by and by for a young lady to go through a course of gymnastics as a previous qualification for the study of music, or a little preparatory exercise at a blacksmith's anvil. One thing is certain—the manufacturers have the best of the rivalry, and can, if they like, adapt their pianos to the fisticuffs of an Amazon without the additional cost of a single sixpence.

With regard to the tone of the instrument to be selected for purchase, any written instruction would be of little service. To tone, in the proper sense of the term, the pianoforte indeed has no claim. In this respect an experienced ear is the best guide; and the taste of the purchaser, who should be aware that loudness is not always the best quality, may influence the selection.

There is one thing yet to be said with regard to the purchase of a pianoforte, and that is, that it should be made with the maker himself, or with some well-known respectable and accredited agent of the maker. It is not generally known that something precisely analogous to the copying of pictures, and palming them off as originals, is carried on upon a large scale in the manufacture of cheap and so-called second-hand pianos. Copies of instruments bearing the names of the first-rate manufacturers, put together by men out of work, or unwilling to work at journey-work, are planted about in all directions, as well in the metropolis as in other large towns. Drapers, hatters, hosiers, glovers, hairdressers, milliners, and a host of others, have pianos to sell—'the property of a lady who has left town'; and a vast number of middlemen, who advertise daily in the London papers, drive a thriving trade by the sale of false and spurious pianofortes, made by untalented bunglers at the cost of from L.10 to L.15, and sold at a profit of cent. per cent. as the second-hand goods of the most eminent manufacturers. Some of these middlemen in a large way of business assume a very high standing, and affect the pretensions of unquestionable integrity—giving warranties with their goods, the only advantage of which is that at the end of six months, if not satisfied, you may change a bad bargain for a worse. Cabinet-makers, too, have taken to

the construction, or rather to the metamorphosis of pianos, in the hands of one of whom the writer saw not long ago one of Collard's 'Pianos for the People' undergoing the process of investiture in a new garb of rosewood and carving, preparatory to sale as one of that maker's most finished productions. From such facts as these, with which one might fill a sheet, the reader will perceive that his best protection against fraud and sophistication is to have recourse at once to the maker or his accredited agent for the purchase of a genuine instrument.

But supposing the piano wisely selected, bought, and safely housed at home, the next thing is the question of its treatment; and here the greatest ignorance appears practically to prevail. Wherever one goes he sees the piano exposed to a thorough draught, or if not, its exemption is the effect of accident rather than of design. The worst, and unfortunately the most favourite position, is opposite the fireplace, and in the track of the constant draught between the door and windows. Every fresh current of moist air carries the cause of rust to the metal, and through the expansion and contraction consequent upon an ever-varying temperature, the strings are never in tune long together. Again, the leather and buffing, by being alternately wet and dry, become hard in the course of time, even when not used at all. This is not the worst: through the shrinking that follows the hardening of the leather, a destructive friction ensues, which, in spite of the black-lead used to guard against it, wears away the substance of the leather at the lower end of the 'stickers,' or conducting-rods, where, in upright instruments, these rest upon the 'hopper,' and a dismal sound like the rattling of dry bones is very speedily the consequence, forming no very agreeable accompaniment to the performer whenever he or she sits down to play, though it may be inaudible to others at a distance. This uncomfortable sound is due to the shrinking and wearing away of the leather from friction, in consequence of which the communication is broken between the key and the hammer which strikes the strings—the hopper having to traverse the space lost through shrinking and wear, and striking the lower end of the conducting-rod with an audible blow. The buffing or baize, moreover, upon which the keys rest, also shrinks and hardens from the same causes, and thus it frequently happens that an instrument which is hardly used at all becomes unfit for use through the ignorance or negligence of the owner. Other injuries of a similar nature ensue from the same causes, which it is not necessary to mention here. It is true all this would occur in the course of years under the best management, and even with the best instruments; but in careless hands this inevitable deterioration will be accomplished in fewer months than it would in years of prudent care. The best place, then, for the piano in the parlour or drawing-room is assuredly somewhere away from the current of air that runs constantly from the door to the window. In a recess on either side of the fireplace, or against the wall fronting the windows, or in some position the least liable to atmospheric currents, is the best place, as well for the instrument as for the performer.

An instrument that will keep in tune is, however, after all, the grand desideratum. This, in the present state of our knowledge on the subject, is unattainable; although an approach to something like it may be secured by the exercise of a little care and prudent expenditure in the outset. All who have paid any attention to the phenomena of strained steel wires know that there is a tendency in a wire which has long been strained to a certain pitch to remain at that pitch, and even to return to it, or towards it, if suddenly altered. Thus if you tune a wire sharper than it should be—say a quarter of a note, by way of experiment, and keep it up to that pitch for a fortnight, and

then let it suddenly down the quarter of a note, it will again grow sharper in the course of twenty-four hours, as though striving to regain its lost note. Now here is a hint for the treatment of pianos, and one which the writer has followed repeatedly with advantage. It appears plain enough, from the principle here suggested, that if a piano were well and regularly tuned for the first year or two—say every month, or oftener, for the first year and a half—it would acquire a tendency to remain in tune, and behave better in that respect ever afterwards than if no such care were taken. This may appear somewhat fanciful, but it has been shewn by experience to be true. Of course this treatment would not prevent an instrument from being affected by sudden variations of temperature, though it would in a considerable degree modify the effects of such variations. Among professional tuners of pianofortes, the man who gets through his work correctly in the shortest time is generally to be preferred. An instrument which is long under the operation of tuning is not the likeliest to remain long in tune. The best tuners tune 'hard,' as it is technically called—that is, with a smart stroke upon every key, and drawing the wire at once up to the required pitch, making little alteration afterwards. It would be well if Lord Stanhope's principle of tuning were generally followed, by which the 'wolf' is equally distributed throughout the scale. The result is extremely agreeable and pleasant to the ear, though the effect of some music is very much altered by it—the distinguishing characteristics of the several sharp and flat keys being thereby in a great measure done away. It is not usual, however, to meet with a tuner who will trouble himself with Lord Stanhope's plan, and still less so to find one who succeeds in the attempt, if induced to make it.

It is greatly to be regretted that pianos are as yet far too expensive for general use among the humbler classes. With the present mode of manufacture there seems no immediate prospect of improvement in this particular. As yet every part of the mechanism, as well as the exterior fabric, is made by hand, and then put together by finishers, who work for high wages, and spend an immense amount of time, pretty much at their own discretion, in chipping, shaving, adjusting, and regulating, to apparently very little purpose; the major part of which tedious and expensive ceremony might be abolished, at least in the production of instruments for popular use, by the adoption of a simple uniform plan of construction, carried out with the precision which the use of machinery in the fabrication of the different parts would ensure. But the magic power of machinery has never yet been brought to bear upon this department of manufacture; and the wonder is, seeing that large and princely fortunes are annually made through the great and increasing demand for these instruments, that such is the case. There seems no reason why a pianoforte should not be as cheap as a clock. The mechanism of the one ought not to be more expensive than that of the other; and the adjustment and regulation of both are perhaps of about equal difficulty. The great cause of the difference in the cost of the two is doubtless that while the clock is made very much by the means of machinery, the piano is entirely the produce of manual labour.

In connection with pianofortes, a word or two may be allowed in regard to the despised old harpsichords, thousands of which are yet extant, and are occasionally offered for sale at prices less than the value of the cases that contain them. Let their possessors pause before they deliver them to be broken up: it is not generally known that they may be converted into charming instruments at the cost of a few shillings, and the exercise of a little ingenuity and labour. The following extract from the writer's musical experience may be of use to some possessor of a harpsichord disposed to repeat his experiment.

A quarter of a century ago, having an old harpsichord in my chamber, I resolved, at the suggestion of a friend, to convert it if possible into a sustaining instrument for the performance of slow music. This intention was accomplished in the following manner:—By means of a common treddle, somewhat similar to that of the travelling knife-grinder, and, like that, worked by one foot, a stout silken thread was made to revolve round the whole of the strings horizontally. This thread had been previously well soaked in resin dissolved in spirits of wine, and thus qualified to act as does the bow of a violin upon the strings. It must be remembered, that in the harpsichord the two strings which are in unison are throughout separated by wider spaces than the other—just the reverse of what is the case with pianofortes. This wide interval gives room for the 'jacks' to play up and down; and each jack being furnished with a slip of quill on either side, twangs both the strings in unison as it rises from the pressure of the key. Having cut away the quills from the jacks, I made a small inverted arch in the top of each, large enough to allow of the revolution of a small brass wheel about the diameter of a pea, and grooved at the edge for the reception of the silk thread. The wheels were turned from a stair-rod by a watchmaker for a trifling charge; and the axles upon which they revolved were short stout needles inserted in holes carefully drilled through the centres of the sides of the arches. By this contrivance, whenever the jack rose by the touch of the finger on the key, the small wheel rose between the strings, and pressed the resined thread (revolving horizontally by the action of the treddle) against both the strings, producing a tone resembling nothing so much as that of the *Æolian* harp, and capable of increase or diminution by the sole pressure of the finger on the key. It answered admirably for very slow music, but hung fire so much that any attempt at a moderately-rapid passage produced no sound at all. For chants and *andante* movements it was well adapted; and when it passed out of my keeping on my leaving England, it made the tour of the country in company with a travelling exhibition, where, being played behind the curtain, it was the source of no little speculation to the public. It may be only right to mention, that owing to the string being necessarily kept rather tight to insure its revolution, there was constant danger of breaking it by touching too many notes at a time; but this danger might be obviated at the present moment by the use of an elastic string of vulcanised caoutchouc spun with cotton or silk. Such an instrument would of course be entirely unsuitable for general practice, but for persons advanced in life, or for mechanics with joints stiffened by hard labour, and with but little time for the practice of music, it might prove a pleasant and useful companion, especially as but very little skill is required to make it 'discourse most eloquent music.'

OTTERTON COTTAGE.

In a picturesque Devonshire village, situated on the banks of the river Otter—which, after playing all sorts of vagaries hereabouts, quietly debouches into the sea at a few miles' distance—resided, some score of years ago, an elderly gentleman named Borradaile, with his wife and daughter. Otterton Cottage, Mr Borradaile's abode, was the mansion of the neighbourhood. Highly ornamented both within and without, it arrested the gaze of the passer-by, who, according to taste, viewed it with an air of approbation or otherwise. The simple country-folks pronounced it a 'rare fine place,' and Madam Borradaile a 'rare fine lady;' and they spoke the truth, for both the domain and its mistress were as fine and full of pretension, lacking real merit, as unskilful hands and foolish heads could make them. Sweet Lucy Borradaile was very fond of her home,

though she by no means admired it; and being a pretty girl of twenty, and moreover an only child, it may be supposed that she was much indulged and petted. She was, indeed, her worthy father's darling and delight; and well did Lucy repay his affection by her dutiful conduct and forbearance: for Mrs Borradaile was her step-mother, and not more than fifteen years Lucy's senior. It was to this lady's love of show and decoration that Otterton Cottage owed its flaunting appendages: she having a weakness for everything that seemed to her to savour of gentility, and an unwaried desire to approach patrician usages and patrician society in general.

She had been married to Mr Borradaile for ten years, and was still a really attractive woman, and would have been yet more so, had not a mincing gait and studied manner, meant to be particularly easy, detracted from her charms. Her little fortune of five hundred pounds had been safely lodged at the local bank by Mr Borradaile, when he made the winsome Nelly Peel his second wife; but to hear Nelly talk of 'her fortune'—it was under her own especial control and at her absolute disposal—one would have imagined that twice five thousand at least was in the bank. However, Mrs Borradaile romanced about 'my own money'—and a marvellous long way it must have gone certainly to procure so many substantial luxuries and comforts of all descriptions; and if Mr Borradaile ever refused to gratify any whim or caprice—which, kind soul! was rare indeed—then Mrs Borradaile whimperingly declared: 'it was hard, with her fortune, that she could not do as she liked.'

'Your fortune, Nelly, my dear!' would her husband good-humouredly exclaim: 'why sure it has a wondrous power of stretching itself out, or it would have all disappeared long ago.' But the point was gained, and the five hundred pounds continued safely deposited in its accustomed place; for all Mrs Borradaile's wants were supplied with a liberal hand.

Mr Borradaile had made his money in trade—a circumstance which his wife could endure no allusion to. Her deceased father had been a lieutenant in a marching regiment, and she once had danced in the same room with an earl's daughter! No wonder Mrs Borradaile boasted her aristocratic reminiscences! Lucy was a patient listener, and if she smiled, it was in a kindly way at her stepmother's foible; for Lucy had learned by heart the blessed lesson of true Christian charity, and was always anxious to hide the bad qualities of others under the shadow of their good qualities. Nevertheless, Lucy Borradaile was sorely tried; for she had a certain dear Cousin Charles, who was in a mercantile house in London, and sometimes ran down to Devon to visit his relatives, and to him, and to his cousinly attentions to Lucy, Mrs Borradaile had a decided antipathy. 'He was of low origin,' the aspiring lady said, 'besides being poor.'

'But, my dear,' replied her spouse, 'Charles is my nephew, and a good, honest, industrious fellow.'

'But not a fit husband for your daughter, Mr Borradaile, I presume,' responded Nelly, tossing her head. 'She might look higher, I should think.'

'Well, well, Nelly, perhaps so,' dubiously answered Mr Borradaile, scratching his bald pate in an absent manner; 'perhaps so—but Charlie is a fine, good lad, nevertheless.'

Mr Borradaile strongly leaned towards his nephew; nor was he blind to the mutual attachment of the young folks; but there was time enough; and Lucy was a decided belle; and she herself *might* change her mind, and look higher too. He reasoned thus, because his wife badgered him about Charles; for he was an easy man, and desired peace and quietness above all things. When Charles came to Otterton Cottage, Mrs Borradaile assumed all the airs and graces of a theatrical queen on the barn-floor—talked at him, patronised him, or else was absolutely rude.

But Charles bore all with smiling good-humour, which only tended to provoke the lady to wilder flights.

'I really wish, my dear Mr Borradaile,' said his wife one evening when they were alone, Lucy having gone to drink tea at the vicarage—'I really do wish, for Lucy's sake, that you would exert yourself, as I am so often asking you to do, and write to this niece of yours, the Honourable Mrs Ivor, and ask her to come and see you during the summer months. Then, in all probability, she would ask us back again to Ivor Lodge, or to B— Square; and consider the immense advantages such an invitation would combine—such an introduction into high society! Oh dear me! I declare it puts me all in a flutter to think of it. Now, do, my dear, write to the Honourable Mrs Ivor at once. She is your niece, and a deal more worth paying attention to than that stupid, vulgar Charles Worthington.'

'Charles is neither vulgar nor stupid, Mrs Borradaile, I beg leave to say,' replied Mr Borradaile angrily; 'and I won't allow him to be called so by anybody. And as to my niece, whom I have never seen—this Honourable Mrs Ivor—if report speaks true, she is an extravagant, flippant creature, not worthy to be named in a breath with Charlie—the honest, fine lad. Besides, you know as well as I do, that if I were fool enough to write, she wouldn't take any notice; for depend upon it she has been taught to be ashamed of having an uncle in trade; for her father's family were as silly as they were proud.'

'But you are not in trade now, Mr B.,' replied his wife; 'and I'm sure if the Honourable Mrs Ivor came here and saw'—'me' she was going to say, but 'Otterton Cottage' was substituted—and saw Otterton Cottage, she would be delighted with its elegance, and not ashamed to claim relationship with the owners.'

'My dear Nelly, you talk like a foolish woman,' said Mr Borradaile peevishly, for he was tired of the incessant boring about this 'honourable' niece. 'Rest assured that Mrs Ivor is far too immersed in her own concerns, in gaiety and fashion, to bestow a second thought on her Devonshire relatives or their elegances. Why it was only the other day that you read an account in the papers of a magnificent fete she gave at Ivor Lodge; and how can you be such a goose as to suppose she would care about this poor place?'

'Ay, ay, it's all very well, Mr B.,' persevered the lady; 'but didn't I read soon afterwards that report said she was in debt and involved? for we didn't doubt that "I," and the stars after it, signified "Ivor," and she a widow too.'

'Well, poor thing, I hope not,' replied Mr Borradaile; 'for she has a noble jointure, though indeed I fear she is a careless one. But I have been told she has a kind heart, although nurtured in a bad school. Don't let us talk about her any more.'

But this command, often repeated after such conversations as the foregoing, was never attended to; and Mrs Borradaile continued to talk of the Honourable Mrs Ivor, and to worry her husband on all occasions, until at length he began to give way, and promised that if she would behave well to Charlie he would 'think about penning a letter to his unknown niece.' He kept his promise; thought about it for many weeks; fidgetted himself almost into a fever, but accomplished the heavy task imposed, and despatched a clearly-written missive to the honourable lady, introducing himself to her notice, mentioning his wife and child—the latter with fond affection and pride—and concluding with the assurance of a hospitable and cordial welcome to Otterton Cottage whenever she liked to come and make acquaintance with her mother's brother. It was a manly, good letter, and no one could have read it without being convinced of the single-hearted benevolence of the honest writer.

Mrs Ivor was the child of Mr Borradaile's only sister,

who had eloped from a boarding-school with the penniless cadet of a noble family; the young wife did not survive the birth of their child, which was taken charge of by its father's offended parents in consideration of the poor baby's desolate state; and their son being compelled to join his regiment abroad, fell a victim soon after to the climate.

Her mother's brother, her only maternal relative, was not permitted to hold any intercourse with Julia de Vere—such intercourse would have been contamination to the De Veres of Vere Hall! At an extremely tender age Julia was espoused to the Honourable Mr Ivor—a wealthy scion of a wealthy race—and found herself a rich, young, and well-looking widow ere she had completed her twenty-fourth year. Rumour had made free with her name; and though no disgrace attached to it, yet that she was a most flighty and extravagant woman of fashion there could be no doubt. But then she was an honourable, and a woman of fashion! Talismanic words to Mrs Borradaile! To be able to speak of 'our niece the Honourable Mrs Ivor' was the delight of her life; to be able to speak to her would be the summit of human felicity! With a beating heart she accompanied Mr Borradaile to the post-office, and witnessed the important letter dropped in its appointed receptacle.

'When will an answer arrive, and what will it be?' she mentally ejaculated. 'If she does agree to come, we must have a new French bedstead in the spare room. And, let me see, pink silk drapery, relieved by soft white muslin, will be the thing; and a toilet-table to match.' And, deep in cogitation concerning suchlike weighty matters, Mrs Borradaile returned home in unusual silence.

But many weeks passed over, and the golden grain waved, and the mellow fruits were ripe, and still no letter came in reply; but Nelly declared 'she did not despair.' Mrs Ivor was doubtless so much engaged that she had not a moment to answer her uncle's epistle. It had been a prolonged 'season' they knew from the public prints; but Mrs Ivor would migrate like the rest of her class, and why might she not turn her steps towards Devon? So Mrs Borradaile lived on hope; and hope in this case, though long deferred, proved more substantial than usual.

A letter was delivered to Mr Borradaile one fine morning when he was at breakfast, sealed with the Ivor crest, written in a cramped hand, but couched in pleasant terms, bearing the signature of Julia Ivor. Mrs Borradaile was in raptures, for the honourable lady declared that she had long been solicitous of making their acquaintance; and concluded by telling her 'dear uncle,' that in a week's time from that day she would be with them at Otterton Cottage, and sojourn for such a period as her numerous engagements permitted. No possibility now, alas! of preparing the new French couch, with its pink silk and white muslin draperies! What a bustle and confusion prevailed in the cottage for the next few days!—what a state of restless excitement Mrs Borradaile was in! 'How would Mrs Ivor come? Of course in a travelling chariot-and-four! Where were they to accommodate her retinue? How were they to amuse the gay lady?'

The momentous time arrived, and to the astonishment of everybody the great lady not only was punctual, but made her appearance in a humble hired chariot and pair, without even a female attendant. Yet to make amends for this apparent want of state, her personal equipments were extremely dazzling—bright colours, jewels, drooping feathers, and satin sheen, not being quite in keeping with the faded vehicle from which she alighted. She was a tall, slight woman, with delicate features, and a pair of small prying black eyes, which, with inquisitive avidity, wandered 'here, there, and everywhere,' unceasingly. She was evidently desirous of making a favourable impression; and there was a

flutter of feather and flounces, and a curtsying and a speechifying, which betrayed the requisite emotion; but when, with what Mrs Borradaile termed 'high-bred nonchalance,' she threw herself on a sofa, applying a scent-bottle to her nose, it was with an air of display and affectation which ill assorted with the affectionate obsequiousness of her manner.

'Really,' whined the honourable guest, 'that terrible conveyance has jolted me to death, so unaccustomed am I to that style of travelling.'

'Then why did you travel so, my dear?' bluntly demanded Mr Borradaile, who was regarding his niece with a puzzled look, which she did not appear quite to relish.

'Why, you see, my dear sir,' replied the lady in soft patronising tones, 'I thought it might inconvenience you had I brought a carriage or servants. So I determined to come in a homely, quiet way, and not to disturb your routine of charming cottage-life.'

'I am sure it is very kind of you to come at all,' said Mrs Borradaile, with eager attention unshawling her guest, and frowning at her husband to be silent. But Peter Borradaile was not always to be silenced even by Nelly, so he sturdily answered his fine lady niece in his own honest fashion.

'As to your inconveniencing us, that is out of the question, my dear, for there is carriage room and stabling for more than you would have brought had you studied your own comfort ever so much. But you'll know better another time. And now, tell me who you are considered to resemble, for your poor mother, my sister Bess, had blue eyes, and—and—I'm afeared you will think your old uncle the tradesman a vulgar fellow, and fit only for going back to his shop, when he says that you are a *leetle* bit older looking than he expected to see you!'

The Honourable Mrs Ivor appeared much shocked by this rude speech, and her face was suffused with scarlet, as she answered quickly: 'The life I have led, uncle, accounts for it: one of the fashionable world must not be judged beside fresh blooming rustic damsels.' Here she looked admiringly at Mrs Borradaile and Lucy, adding: 'Your natural rouge would be coveted by my beautiful though pallid friend the Duchess of C—.'

This was the climax: here was the friend of the Duchess of C— being bored by Peter Borradaile, and perhaps disgusted at the first onset!

'You do make such odd speeches, Mr Borradaile,' said Nelly deprecatingly. 'Pray excuse him, madam'—this to Mrs Ivor—'he often says quite as homely things to me.'

'Do call me Julia,' minced the reclining lady. 'My beloved friend, Lady Annabel, always does; and you know, besides, I am your niece.' And from that time forward the most amicable footing of intimacy existed between the two ladies, increasing daily as they knew more of each other. Mrs Borradaile was 'aunt,' and the Honourable Mrs Ivor was 'Julia'; but Julia did not take to Lucy, and she whispered in confidence to 'dear aunt,' that Cousin Lucy was 'decidedly plebeian.' Now Julia's little prying black eyes never seemed to like meeting the open truthful gaze of sweet Lucy Borradaile: Lucy was so quiet, unobtrusive, and at the same time so self-possessed, that it was impossible for affectation or impertinence to make way with her. And the impertinence and affectation of the Honourable Mrs Ivor became more conspicuous each day and hour she passed at Otterton; and ere she had been their guest a week, hysterical affections much disturbed the equanimity of Mr Borradaile, particularly as Julia began to hint about an 'anxious and harrowed mind.'

'Poor, dear love!' whispered Mrs Borradaile to her good man, 'she has been so extravagant; but she has such elegant taste and fine discrimination that we must look over such unimportant matters. We must

help her out of her difficulties, Mr B., by careful counsel and the loan of a fifty pounds or so.'

'Fifty pounds!' cried Mr Borradaile; 'I wish fifty may do: she has asked me for a deal more than that already.'

'No! Has she though?' replied Nelly with an expressive simper. 'Poor, dear love! she tells me her villa is the most unique thing in the world, and I am to stay there at Christmas, and the Duchess of C—, and Lady Annabel too. She means of course to include you, Mr B., and Lucy in the invitation; but we must do our best to cheer her up ere she leaves us.'

And the best was done to cheer up the troublesome fine lady ere she departed on her travels, which in three weeks from the date of her arrival she deplored it was her 'hard destiny to do.' This announcement, however, seemed to have been hastened by the arrival of Charles Worthington, who found still less favour in the eyes of Mrs Ivor than in those of Nelly herself. After his appearance the honourable dame became more and more restless; till after being closeted for some time with Mr Borradaile, she informed the circle generally of her determination to quit 'beautiful Otterton' the next day. Charles and Lucy exchanged smiling glances as Mrs Ivor bemoaned 'her doom'; she 'so adored the country,' and 'was so supremely happy with them.'

'Well, my dear, then you must come again,' said Mr Borradaile in the simplicity and kindness of his honest heart; 'and don't pay us such a short visit—you know that Devon is a fine place to economise in.' This was said in a significant voice, meant to be very expressive.

'Ah, my dear, excellent uncle!' said the lady; 'you are all coming to me at Ivor Lodge to pass Christmas; my dearest cronies, the Duchess of C— and Lady Annabel, are to be of our party. You, too, Mr Charles, I shall be happy to see with your relatives.'

Charles bowed gravely, and thanked the honourable dame for her invitation.

Mr Borradaile was evidently relieved when his niece departed; and although Charles and Lucy uttered not a word against the absent, yet they too obviously threw off an irksome restraint which it had been impossible to divest themselves of in the presence of their late guest. Mrs Borradaile also was supremely happy; the Honourable Julia was her 'beloved niece'; Julia had presented her, too, with a gay brooch, and the anticipation of the coming Christmas was an Elysian dream!

But when the festive season approached, and no tidings were heard of Mrs Ivor, despite her promises to her 'dear aunt' of corresponding regularly—then did Mrs Borradaile wax wroth, and become fidgety exceedingly, to the manifest discomfort of her worthy husband.

'Why don't you write to Julia yourself, Mrs B.?' said he: 'that would be the shortest way of settling things; and tell her *you* don't forget her invitation to eat roast beef and plum-pudding.'

'Upon my word, Mr B.,' responded his spouse, brightening up, 'that is not a bad idea of yours—though I shan't be so vulgar as to name roast beef and plum-pudding!'

Mr Borradaile, who was endeavouring to get through the newspaper, here made a sudden exclamation as his eye caught a paragraph which he pointed out to his wife, saying at the same time: 'This accounts for my niece's silence, and I think you had better write to her at once, Nelly. She didn't mention, when she quitted us, that it was her intention to sojourn in Paris—that sink of extravagance—or I don't think I should?'—But here Mr Borradaile checked himself, and again applied vigorously to the paper.

The paragraph alluded to was merely a statement, under the head of fashionable intelligence, of the Honourable Mrs Ivor's return, after a prolonged sojourn in the French capital, and her intention of enter-

taining a distinguished party of friends at Ivor Lodge during the ensuing Christmas.

'Dear Julia! no wonder she forgot to write in dear delightful Paris. I can perfectly excuse her!' And Nelly forthwith sat down and penned a neat and affectionate billet to her 'dear niece,' reminding her of the nearness of the happy time when they were to have the felicity of paying her a visit, and in a postscript, delicately alluding to a little matter of business between the two ladies.

What was Mrs Borradaile's rage and mortification, Mr Borradaile's surprise, and Lucy's sympathising concern, on a few carelessly scrawled lines from 'Julia Ivor' being received through the post, enclosing poor Nelly's note, and politely regretting that she had opened a missive evidently designed for some one else, but which she now hastened to return.

'This is not my cousin Julia's writing,' said Lucy, examining the letter; 'she wrote a curious, round, cramped hand, as if slowly and with some difficulty; but this is dashed off in true patrician style.'

'Nevertheless, Lucy, it is from Mrs Ivor, sealed with her seal, and dated Ivor Lodge—there is no mistake! The impudent minx!—what can she mean? Does she mean to cut us?'

'Cut us? nonsense, Mrs B.,' exclaimed her husband. 'There is some queer mistake, depend upon it. Why, how can you suppose she would cut us, as you term it, when she is in my debt a good five hundred pounds, which she wheedled me out of, to help, she said, to free her from some pressing difficulties?'

'Five hundred pounds from you, Mr B.!' cried Nelly in dismay; 'impossible, she never dared do such a thing.'

'Dare or not, Mrs B., she got it, and I wish I may get it,' replied Mr Borradaile sighing.

'Oh the cunning jade!' screamed Mrs Borradaile; 'she's got my five hundred too! I drew it out of the bank for her, and she faithfully promised to pay me before Christmas, and gave me this brooch as a pledge. I'll keep her secret no longer—her debt of honour indeed, to the Duchess of C—, which my fortune went to pay! Mistake or no mistake, I'll have my money back, if I set off for Ivor Lodge, and face Madam Ivor myself!'

'Be pacified, Mrs B.,' said her spouse gravely, for he was considerably staggered by what his wife had unfolded; 'you should not have given so large a sum, even to my niece, without consulting me, and it was wrong of her to play upon your weakness, and borrow it. But no doubt all will be right, and we must clear up this strange mistake. You remember Julia asking Charles to visit her at Christmas; I shall write to him at once, mentioning what has happened, and request him to call at Richmond, see Julia, and clear it up.'

'What a capital plan, papa!' cried Lucy: 'there is nothing like going to work in a straightforward, plain way.'

'I wish every lady thought so, my darling,' replied her father. 'Your mother and I would be richer by a thousand pounds just now.'

'La! Mr B., do you think the money isn't safe?' cried Nelly. 'She is your niece, you know; not mine, thank goodness!'

Mr Borradaile was a wise man, and he never reprimanded; so he only gave a sly smile, which, however, said a great deal, but held his peace.

Charles Worthington, after a slight delay, answered his uncle's letter in person. 'Well, Charles,' was the eager greeting, 'have you been to Richmond?'

'Yes,' was the quiet reply.

'And have you seen Julia Ivor?'

'Yes, in the same tone.

'Well; and what does she say for herself?'

'She says that she is very sorry for you.'

'Sorry!—what the deuce is she sorry about? Is she a bankrupt, Charles?'

'No, sir,' said Charles smiling; 'far from that, I should think.'

'Then what is she sorry about—and what is all this? Do explain at once, and in few words, for I see plainly there is something wrong.'

'There is, indeed, my dear uncle; and you have been most shamefully robbed.'

'Robbed!' exclaimed Mr and Mrs Borradaile in chorus—'robbed!'

'Yes, I fear so. To make a painful matter short, let me tell you that your niece, Mrs Ivor, is quite incapable of such proceedings as the false Mrs Ivor was so successful in. The fine lady whom you entertained here was no less a personage than Penelope Smith, the handmaiden of the real honourable lady, who is a charming personage despite her foibles; for she severely blames herself for the careless habits which afforded such opportunities for the clever but evil-disposed Pen to carry out her knavish projects.' Charles then went on to say, that Mrs Ivor frequently desired Penelope Smith to open her letters, and burn those which were of no interest or consequence: in short, Pen was her idle lady's right hand. But Pen was found out in an intimacy with a notorious swindler, and Mrs Ivor threatened to discharge her if she did not immediately give up so disreputable a suitor. After some demur, Pen promised to do so; but this was merely a subterfuge; for to her mistress's surprise she suddenly notified her intention of quitting Mrs Ivor's service, just as the latter was on the eve of setting off for the continent. Mrs Ivor was very angry and annoyed, but she comforted herself with the reflection that in Paris she could easily procure an abigail less faithless and quite as expert as Miss Pen. So Penelope Smith was instantly dismissed, and Mrs Ivor had since heard that she had gone off to America with the vagabond, at whose instigation, doubtless, she had played off her impudent trick on the Borradailes, suggested to her fertile imagination on reading Mr Borradaile's epistle to his unknown niece, and also from perhaps having heard rumours of Mrs Ivor's maternal descent, thus corroborating Mr Borradaile's expressions of their being strangers, yet such near kin.

'The name of Borradaile is one,' said Mrs Ivor to Charles, 'which has haunted me in dreams as a dim memory of childhood.'

'Yet you were not aware that it was your deceased mother's maiden name,' replied Charles.

The lady's face darkened as she spoke with a sigh: 'I have always feared to ask aught concerning that dear parent; for I was always forbidden, in a threatening and mysterious manner, so much as to allude to my mother or her family.'

'She was, however, the sister of a good man and an upright,' replied Charles warmly; 'and the fault of an early and thoughtless marriage is the only one you have to blush for when your mother is named.' Here Charles ceased, for Mrs Ivor was weeping and much affected; but ere he quitted her a full explanation of past circumstances ensued, when she expressed an earnest desire to know her maternal uncle and Cousin Lucy. 'Moreover,' said Charles, 'she entreats you all to keep your appointment with the "Honourable Mrs Ivor," your humble servant being included in this real and hospitable invitation.'

'And my five hundred pounds,' cried Mrs Borradaile—'am I never to see that again?'

'I fear not, madam,' replied Charles with a comically serious face.

'Well, then, I'll have nothing to do with fine ladies, real or pretended, any more. Not I, indeed! I'll be bound the mistress is as bad as the maid, and she'll be borrowing our cash by and by. No, no; I've had enough of *honourables*—and my own fortune gone for ever!'

'My dear Nelly,' said her husband kindly, 'I would

cheerfully have paid down five hundred pounds to cure you of that little besetting weakness—a love of fine folks. So never mind; you shall be as rich as ever; and I'll return into the bank your whole 'fortune' in your own name. As to my share of the loss I don't regret it, if it gives me such a niece as Charlie here describes. We'll keep our merry Christmas, however, at Otterton among our own people and our own poor; although I think it just possible that Julia Ivor may be induced to join us early in the spring. What say you, Charlie, my lad?"

Charles laughed, and sweet Lucy blushed, and Mr Borradaile was immensely facetious; but the why or wherefore was not explained, and Nelly said it was 'very odd to jest when a thousand pounds had been made off with.'

But many serious words are spoken in jest; for with early spring came the real Mrs Ivor, to be present at the celebration of Lucy's nuptials with Charles Worthington, and looking almost as pretty as the fair bride. Ere she quitted Otterton, Julia had succeeded in reconciling Mrs Borradaile to one fashionable lady at least, and in making Uncle Borradaile promise to bring Nelly with him on a long summer visit to Ivor Lodge, not to meet the Duchess of C—— and Lady Annabel, but personages of far more importance to them all—even Mr and Mrs Charles Worthington.

ATMOSPHERIC WAVES.

The term atmospheric waves is one which of late years has not unfrequently appeared in print in the reports of the British Association and other scientific publications, without, however, conveying to the minds of the majority of readers other than a vague notion of its import. The phenomena which it indicates are nevertheless of a singularly interesting character, giving us, in what is as yet known of them, an insight to some of the movements of the great aerial ocean which surrounds us.

One of the facts revealed to us by the barometer is, that the pressure of the atmosphere is undergoing continual modifications, now rising to a maximum, then descending to a minimum, at longer or shorter intervals. The maximum of pressure has been found by experience not confined to any special locality, but manifested over a wide region at one and the same time, forming, as it were, a continuous line, sometimes of great length. Extended observation has shewn that the readings of a barometer at one station are intimately related to similar readings at another, and all subordinated to some great natural law, the operation of which is not yet made out with certainty. Its manifestation is seen in the elevation and depression of the mercury: for example, at the most westerly of a series of stations the barometer may indicate a maximum of pressure; it passes over and is absorbed at the next in order; and so on *seriatim* until it has been traced at the whole number.

According to Professor Dove, the north and south aerial currents being converted into south-west in the one hemisphere and north-west in the other, by the rotation of the earth, these directions would probably be found to apply to the barometric movements. But another set of currents has been detected as acting directly at right angles to the former, and the continued crossing and interference of the one with the other may be regarded as a cause of the apparent complexity of meteorological phenomena. A distinction, too, is to be made in the character of winds: some are winds of 'translation,' others of 'oscillation,' and will bear a comparison with 'oceanic currents and tide streams.' The first are monsoons and trade-winds; the last, as Sir J. Herschel observes, 'take their rise in local and temporary causes prevailing

over great areas simultaneously, the principal no doubt depending on the prevalence of cloud or clear sky, rain or dryness over great tracts for several days or weeks in succession. But once produced, and an extensive atmospheric undulation once propagated, a wind or system of winds dependent on such undulation necessarily arises also.'

Representing the maximum pressure at different stations, as above observed, by a line, it is found to have an advancing movement, caused, there is reason to believe, by an undulation, and so similar to the movements of the waters of the ocean, that the term *atmospheric wave* has been applied as most expressive of the peculiar action and effect. With maxima for wave-crests, and minima for troughs or hollows, we may thus ascertain the extent and duration of a wave; taking care, however, not to confound the movement with that of the wind. The advancing form, it must be remembered, is associated with a molecular movement—the former indicated by the barometer, the latter due to the wind.

The inquiries hitherto made into this interesting branch of natural science, and first set on foot twenty years ago, are mainly due to the British Association. So actively were they at first taken up, that by the year 1844 there were more than seventy stations of observation, embracing Europe from north to south, with an outlier or two in Asia. A large mass of observations was speedily collected, involving so severe an amount of labour in their reduction and discussion as to cause most of the observers to shrink from the task of further research. The papers by Mr Birt, published for several consecutive years in the reports of the British Association, contain the sum of much that has been done in this and other countries; while those by M. Quetelet, secretary of the Academy of Sciences at Brussels, comprise a series of highly valuable results and suggestions.

Starting with the observations of 1835, Mr Birt shews that the hollow or trough of an atmospheric wave was vertical over Brussels at three A.M. on one of the recorded days, and over London at eleven A.M. on the same day, having been eight hours travelling westerly from one to the other, at a rate of nearly thirteen miles an hour. For want of other stations beyond the two extremities, it was not possible at that time to determine the length of the wave. Afterwards a line traced from Markree in Ireland, passing through London, Brussels, and Geneva, to Gibraltar, shewed a marked progressive relationship among them. It was observed, however, that at times the Irish curve separated itself from the general law, as though disturbed by some cross wave; at others a sudden rise or 'dislocation' appeared at Gibraltar, assignable, as was supposed, to the 'immense radiation' of the African continent. In December of the same year, so regular and systematic was the rise of the mercury along this line of stations, that, in Sir J. Herschel's words, 'to take in an effect of this nature, we must enlarge our conception of an atmospheric wave till it approaches in some degree, in the extent of its sweep and the majestic regularity of its progress, to those of the tide-waves of the ocean.'

A correspondence has also been noticed between Oxford and London, Geneva and Turin, Cadix and Gibraltar. On one of the days in September 'a perfectly well-marked and definite atmospheric wave passed over the British Isles and the west of Europe, the crest of the wave having a direction nearly N.N.E. and S.S.W., and its progress being from W.N.W. to E.S.E. The half-breadth of the wave, which occupied twenty-six hours in its passage, covered a space extending from Oxford in a direction perpendicular to that of the west, to a point not far from Halle in Wirtemberg, which gives, by rough measurement on a map, about 540 miles, and a velocity of about 21 miles per hour.'

The general results obtained from the discussion of

the observations at that time were the having traced 'distinct barometric waves of many hundreds of miles in breadth over the whole extent of Europe—that is to say, at least over an area having Markree in Ireland, Cadiz in Spain, Parma in Italy, and Kremsmünster in Austria for its angular points. Not only the breadth, but the direction of the front, and the velocity of progress of such waves, were clearly made out.'

In June of 1836 a wave presented itself which was from nine to ten hours in passing from Markree to Halifax in Nova Scotia—a fact which led to further observations on both sides the Atlantic. A comparison of the Greenwich observations for 1840-41 with those made at Toronto in the same period, shewed that a general resemblance existed between the two: at each place the mercury had risen above thirty inches in every month. So clearly was the result established, that by taking a maximum of the one it was possible to predicate the maximum of the other at an interval of a few days, the difference of time being the time required for the passage of the wave. It further appears, on strict examination of the readings obtained at Greenwich, that 'twice in each month the barometer passes a maximum above, or but very slightly depressed below thirty inches, but more usually above.'

The interval between the occurrence and recurrence of the highest and lowest readings is occasionally protracted beyond what at first sight may appear to be the regular period. Thus between the January and February minima of 1841, 36 days transpired; and 31 days 16 hours between the September and October maxima of the same year. Assuming that the maxima are crests of waves, 'sixteen waves traversed England, having a mean interval between their crests of 14 days 5 hours,' in the seven months between February and October. In all of these a certain symmetry is apparent, and by a little scrutiny the type or normal wave for different countries, or different localities in the same country, may be found. Where irregularities occur, they are chiefly due to geographical position: the more the surface of a country is broken up by hills or mountains the less of uniformity will there be in the atmospheric currents. Besides which, any one system of waves is exposed to interference from different systems, or other physical causes. It is obvious that trustworthy facts can only be eliminated by attention to these disturbing causes. A few data, types for given localities, and lines of greatest symmetry, have already been established. In November 1842, one of the latter extended from Dublin to Birmingham, Brussels, and Munich. In 1845 its course was along the southern shores of England.

With regard to the direction of waves, this is deduced from observation of the times when the maxima pass stations widely distant from each other, the order varying as the 'axis of translation' varies. Taking Greenwich, Prague, and Munich—waves from W.N.W. pass Greenwich first, and the other two places almost simultaneously, a considerable time afterwards: these exhibit, therefore, simultaneous maxima. From S.S.W. Greenwich and Munich are simultaneous: S. by W. the order is Munich, Greenwich, Prague; and S.E. Munich, Prague, and Greenwich. The line of direction for Central Europe is from the coasts of Belgium, the Netherlands, and North Germany, to the frontiers of Austria, where it converges at the extremity of the Tyrolean Alps, from whence it is prolonged, and rises to the north of the Black Sea beyond Moscow. This distance, according to M. Quetelet, is travelled over in two days, at the rate of from six to ten leagues an hour—being more rapid in proportion as the surface of the land is free from inequalities.

The system for European Russia is comprised in Dorpat, Petersburg, and Kasan. The observations in the first two accord well together, while Kasan appears to be connected also with the system of the Ural, and

forms a meeting-point for the two sets of curves. In Russian Asia the stations as yet are few, but the waves are found to traverse the great plains of the north from Pekin to Nertchinsk with marked regularity. It is worth notice, that although no close or evident relation exists among these localities, there are yet points of resemblance; for on counting the maxima and minima of any two curves for three months, there is found nearly always the same number. Parma and Pekin, so widely separated, shew a remarkable similarity on being compared.

As though to render the analogy with tide waves of the ocean more complete, certain 'nodal points' have been ascertained, round which the atmospheric waves and the winds revolve. After long-continued observation of the barometer at Brussels, the steadiness and gradual change in the height of the mercury, that city has been found to be a node. Greenwich is also a node, as regards the wind, for there, as stated by Mr Airy, the vane 'makes five revolutions per annum in one uniform direction.' On the other hand, Edinburgh is conspicuous 'for inequalities and abrupt fluctuations;' Turin is affected by the nearness of the Alps; Cadiz, Gibraltar, and Tangier are subject to an anomalous rise and fall of the mercury between midnight and sunrise, which interferes with and often counteracts and overcomes the regular tendency to depression in that interval—a peculiarity which is probably owing to the proximity of the great radiating surface of the African deserts.

The troughs of the waves represent parallel lines of least pressure; consequently in them the molecular movement is strongest, and a lateral movement is induced towards them. The wind would be comparatively feeble at the crest, and by the passage of the crest over any given place the current of the foremost trough would be replaced by that of the hindmost, and in this way is explained the calm which occurs, and the sudden reversal of wind during the passing of an atmospheric wave, and the fact that the force of the wind increases as the deeper hollow of the wave advances.

Among the phenomena under notice there is one singularly remarkable—that known as the great November wave. From some cause as yet unexplained, a marked symmetrical wave occurs in this particular month year after year. In November 1842 a wave was fifteen days in passing over London, the transit of the crest occurred on the 18th; in 1843 it was on the 14th, and almost identical in contour with that of the former year. It came earlier—October 27—in 1844; and in 1845 again on November 14th; in 1846 on the 9th, but with some deviation from what had been before observed—the curve, though of the average length, being very flat, owing to the steadiness of the mercurial column through the entire period, with one exception, at more than thirty inches. At the same time subordinate waves of interference were clearly indicated, coming from the N.W. and S.W., and meeting and crossing at Brussels—another verification of its nodal position. In this November wave Mr Birt considers that we have the type of the barometric oscillations for that period of the year. The rise and fall of the wave are so nearly alike; they occur in the two weeks nearest the middle of the month; the undulations which disturb the symmetry of outline are always five in number; at the setting in of the wave the barometer is low—under twenty-nine inches. There are one or two exceptions to the rule here specified, but not sufficient to invalidate it. Eleven years' observations shew the crest to have passed within five days of the middle of the month, while from a series continued through fifteen years, it appears that a remarkable depression of the mercury occurs on the 28th. 'When dealing with undulations of such extent, it is by no means a visionary speculation to consider the possibility of tracing them over the whole of our globe; nay, perhaps of obtaining evidence

of their performing, tide-like, two or more revolutions round its surface.

That there are tides in the atmosphere is pretty clearly determined by the meteorological observations taken at St Helena during several years. The conclusion has been come to from the fact, that on that island the mercury is higher every day 'when the moon is on the meridian above or below the pole, than when she is six hours distant from the meridian on either side.' The effect is minute, but not, on that account, the less real.

As to the origin of atmospheric waves, it is admitted that the heated air of the equatorial regions, after its ascent and cooling, descends in the polar regions. The dispersion of this cooled air may give rise to the aerial waves; their propagation would accompany the currents from the pole to the equator, and in our hemisphere from north to south. Or the cooled air may diffuse itself immediately around the pole, and if it form, as it were, a complete canopy, the waves would be continuous under every longitude, and passing any given station, might be traced all round the globe. But contrariwise, should the diffusion of the cooled air take place at some distance from the pole, instead of forming a continuous circle, and propagating itself by extension, it will be a sector having its angle more or less open. The sectors, by penetrating or insulating each other, would produce as a result a rapid series of undulations at the points of contact.

According to M. Quetelet, the latter is the most probable explanation of the phenomena; the observations indicate rather several distinct waves than one continuous. As before observed, the question is complicated by the influence which a secondary system of waves exerts on the principal one; lessening, or at times nullifying, the maximum. Yet there seems no reason to doubt that certain undulations, continuous but irregular, do circle round the pole. In Northern Europe and Siberia a system extends from north to south, the waves of which may be regarded as sectors of different arcs not having precisely the same centres, nor yet at the same instant the same radii. From the juxtaposition of these partial waves there will result a general undulation, making the entire circuit of the pole in every latitude, advancing in certain places towards the south, in others retreating towards the north, whereby the stations in the circle would be continually recording a succession of waves.

THE PALACE AT WESTMINSTER.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

M. VIEUXTEMPS and Herr von Blunderblast were punctual to their appointment—time, two o'clock P.M.; place, by Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square—and we forthwith proceeded down Parliament Street.

'Does the House of Lords assemble so early?' asked Herr von Blunderblast.

'Not often as a legislative body: it is now sitting in its judicial capacity only. The House of Peers is the final Court of Appeal from Chancery, and writs of error lie to it from the Courts of Queen's Bench in England and Ireland, and the Supreme Courts of Scotland.'

'A miscellaneous kind of Cour de Cassation,' remarked M. Vieuxtemps with quite a perceptible sneer. 'An assemblage of bishops, admirals, generals, parvenu merchants, must constitute an admirable tribunal for deciding in the last resort vexed and intricate questions of law or equity.'

'The House of Lords exercises higher judicial functions than your Cour de Cassation, and the certainly absurd theory of such a court of appellate jurisdiction is much modified in practice. It is true that every peer who has subscribed the parliamentary roll has an undisputed right to attend and vote upon all judicial decisions, but the judgments in point of

fact are invariably pronounced by the law lords alone who have heard the arguments: by the lord chancellor for the time being—by ex-chancellors, vice-chancellors, and judges who happen to be peers. Amongst others, at the present time, by Lords Lyndhurst, Brougham, Campbell, Denman, Cranworth.'

'This merely voluntary refraining from the exercise of a right on the part of the mass of the peerage,' said Herr von Blunderblast, 'may answer very well in fair weather, when only ordinary questions of law are in dispute, but scarcely, sir, I should think, when decisions involving political and party results are in the balance.'

'It should seem so, but the fact is otherwise. This was proved on a somewhat recent and famous occasion. The late Mr O'Connell was convicted of sedition, and fined and imprisoned by the Irish Court of Queen's Bench, Dublin. A writ of error, impugning the legality of the proceedings in that court, was brought, and the judgment was reversed by the House of Lords—that is, by the votes of three law lords, Cottenham, Denman, and Campbell, against two, those of Lyndhurst and Brougham. When the judgment was given there were many peers in the House vehemently opposed to O'Connell, and who thought the judgment of the court below ought to have been maintained. One Irish peer cried, "Non-content," when the question was put by the lord chancellor, and rose to insist upon his strict right to divide the House; but the cries of "Order, order!" which arose on all sides, compelled him to forego his intention; and judgment, the effect of which was the immediate liberation of O'Connell, was pronounced. So entirely a thing of growth, of precedence, and habit, as I have before told you, is this constitution of checks and balances under which we live.'

'A very illogical haphazard system it appears to me,' said M. Vieuxtemps.

'Quite so: it is no more symmetrical than a granite rock.'

'But pray,' persisted the systematising French gentleman—'pray how was it that the law or statute by virtue of which the peers sit as a judicial body did not prescribe in terms the practice which the good sense of the Lords alone induces them to adopt?'

'For the very excellent reason that the House does not exercise judicial functions by virtue of any special law or statute. It is a jurisdiction purely founded on precedent, custom—a remnant of the all-embracing authority exercised by the House when it was the "*Magnum Concilium*" of the realm, and it would not even now bear much straining. The Lords had a narrow miss of losing this appellate jurisdiction of theirs at about the same time that the Commons, in the reign of Charles the Second, deprived them of their claim to "original jurisdiction."'

'Indeed! How did that happen?'

'In this manner: One Skinner sued the East India Company before the Peers for alleged wrong and oppression, and obtained five thousand pounds' damages against the Company, the plea in bar of jurisdiction having been overruled. The corporation appealed to the Commons, who reported, "that the Lords, in taking cognisance of an original complaint, had acted illegally." The Peers, highly indignant, in their turn resolved, "that the House of Commons entertaining the scandalous petition of the East India Company against the Lords' House of Parliament was a breach of their Lordships' privileges," and following up their resolution by deeds, fined Sir Samuel Barnardiston, chairman of the Company, and member of parliament, five hundred pounds. He refused to pay, and the Lords committed him to prison.'

'Bravo!' exclaimed M. Vieuxtemps. 'That was acting with vigour and decision—ever the true secret of success.'

'Perhaps so when the opposing forces are pretty

equal in substantive power, but availing little to either of the other estates of the realm in a contest with the Commons."

"Well, but what," said Herr von Blunderblast, "did your famous Commons do? Did they send a troop of cavalry to liberate their member by force?"

"Not they. But having resolved that to bring "original" suits before the Peers was illegal, they directed the sergeant-at-arms to seize Skinner, and shut him up in Newgate for "contempt" of the Honourable House; and the ultimate result was the liberation of Barnardiston without payment of the fine, and the suppression of the original jurisdiction of the Lords; it being well understood that the Commons would send any and everybody to Newgate, by warrant of Mr Speaker, who should bring, or assist in bringing, an original suit before the Peers."

"Upon my word!" said Herr von Blunderblast, "a very decisive mode of action, and, I doubt not, much more effectual in the long-run than horse, foot, and artillery. But you were saying the Peers, about the same time, had a narrow escape of losing the appellate authority, the exercise of which we are about to witness."

"In 1675 their lordships, in proceedings in the appeal case of Shirley *versus* Sir John Fagg, compelled members of parliament to appear as respondents. This the Commons pronounced a breach of privilege, and the ever-ready sergeant-at-arms seized four counsel who had pleaded in the cause before the Peers, and committed them to Newgate for contempt."

"They did!" exclaimed M. Vieuxtemps: "but where was the king that he did not interfere to prevent so audacious an act of arbitrary power?"

"I am sure I cannot say; for aught I know—in the words of the nursery rhyme—

"The king was in his palace, counting out his money;"

but wherever his majesty might have been, neither the king, "nor all the king's horses, and all the king's men," could get a prisoner for "contempt" out of the clutches of the Commons during their session. Even the writ of *habeas corpus* is powerless to do that; and were it not so, I do not well see how they could efficiently exercise many of their highest functions—the impeachment, for instance, of great officers of state, and the supervision of the law courts, the judges of which they can compel to appear at the bar of the House to answer for neglect or corruption in the performance of their duties. The Lords, however, tried a fall with the Commons, and another illustration of the necessary result following a collision between the vessel of porcelain and that of iron was afforded. They directed the gentleman usher of the black rod, their executive officer, to liberate the four counsel: he did so. The sergeant-at-arms, by order of the Commons, retook them, and for better security lodged them in the Tower. The Lords armed their gentleman usher of the black rod with a writ empowering him to release the barristers by force from their new custody: the lieutenant of the Tower applied to the House of Commons for instructions, and was ordered to retain the prisoners in defiance of any command to liberate them not issuing from themselves. The final upshot of these complicated disputes, which lasted over several years, was, as I have stated, the loss of the original jurisdiction of the Peers, and the permitted retention of the appellate functions, saving, of course, "the undoubted privileges of the Commons." But here we are in Abingdon Street once more, and at the temporary entrance of their Lordships' new House.

"Shall we be admitted without orders?"

"There is no necessity for any order when the House is sitting as a court of justice. By the way, if any of your friends should merely wish to see the interior of the House, they can do so on every Wednesday and

Saturday, by application at the Lord Chamberlain's Office just below, on this same side of the way. Any decently-attired person can have a pass-paper by merely giving his address in writing. But let us in."

"Those eternal wigs again!" said M. Vieuxtemps *sotto voce*, as we reached the space below the bar of the gilded gorgeous chamber.

"They are arguing an appeal from a Chancery judgment to the House of Lords."

"But where is the House of Lords?" inquired Herr von Blunderblast.

"Those three gentlemen seated on the scarlet-cushioned benches are the House of Lords on this occasion. Three peers suffice to make a House; and three being present, the House is complete."

"A curious House!" remarked M. Vieuxtemps, after having listened to and watched the proceedings for about a quarter of an hour. "One of the three peers sitting in judgment upon the decree of a lord chancellor is busy with a newspaper; another is reading a letter; and the third, who alone appears to listen, every now and then starts up, walks about the House with his hands in his pockets, and interrupts counsel in the strangest manner."

"The peer reading the newspaper is a captain in the royal navy; he absorbed in the letter is a general officer; and the third is the law lord, who is hearing and will decide this appeal. The two others have been caught, and retained merely to make a House, and will have no more really to do with the decision than you or I."

"Look!" hastily whispered Herr von Blunderblast; "the law lord has shot out of the House by the red curtain yonder."

"He has retired for a short time only; and as proceedings are necessarily suspended during his absence, you have leisure to look around and give me, slightly above your breath, your opinion of this dazzling chamber."

"A splendid place certainly; but"—M. Vieuxtemps paused. "But what an overpowering glare of gilding and lavish ornament! The stained windows are powerless to shade or soften such a mass of gilded chairs, gilded pillars, gilded galleries, gilded candelabra, gilded ceiling, red cushions, red curtains, red woollack—for that enormous square ottoman in front of the Queen's chair of state, with its enamels and crystals is, I conclude, the woollack—red, blue, and gold colour, in lavish profusion! It is certainly a very dazzling, glittering chamber; but hardly suitable, it seems to me, for a hall in which legislative business is to be transacted."

"It is the Peers' House you will remember—the chamber in which Her Majesty meets and addresses the two Houses. The Commons' House will have little or no gilding; and, after all, it is solid oak which the glittering gold-leaf covers and conceals."

"Surely," said Herr von Blunderblast, "this chamber could not contain the British peerage, between four and five hundred in number?"

"Certainly it would not seat them. The benches on each side, with red morocco cushions, will hold about two hundred and fifty; then there are the cross-benches in front of us; and the light, elegant, side-galleries. But it is very seldom indeed that half the peers are present. The custom in this House of voting by proxy, except in committee, tends of course greatly to diminish the average attendance."

"The chair on the right of the Queen's is, I perceive by the triple plume above it, intended for the Prince of Wales. Has His Royal Highness yet occupied it?"

"Not yet; but I daresay it will not be long before he takes part in the splendid pageantry of opening or proroguing parliament."

"That must be a magnificent scene, and a very

trying one, I should suppose, to a young female sovereign.

'Her Majesty appears in it to great advantage, enacting her part in the gorgeous ceremonial with inimitable dignity and grace—a grace and dignity which lessons could not teach. Her reading of the speech is singularly fine, purely intonated, and clear, effortless, and musical as a silver-bell.'

'The House is, I suppose, generally full upon such occasions?'

'It has always been so during this reign. The rise of the House when the Queen enters, thronged as it is with peers and peeresses, gorgeously arrayed in stars, garters, feathers, diamonds, naval and military uniforms, bishops in lawn sleeves, foreign diplomatists covered with orders and crosses, is magnificent; and after Her Majesty is seated, her ladies and pages have arranged her splendid robe, and she commands her faithful Commons to be summoned, there is another, and especially if she be there to prorogue the parliament, a far more impressive character of power impressed upon the scene. Mr Speaker enters, followed by a mass of unruly members, jostling each other for a good place, and filling to overflow the space below the bar in which we are now standing. As soon as silence is obtained, the right honourable gentleman addresses the Queen, enumerates the chief labours of the session, and concludes by presenting the Supply and Appropriation Bills, reserved for the occasion, and prays Her Majesty's assent to them; which assent is accordingly given in the old formula used only for this particular bill:—"La Reine remercie ses bons sujets, accepte leur b n volence, et ainsi le veut"—("The Queen thanks her good subjects, accepts their gift or benevolence, and so wills it.") One feels that those ordinarily-attired men, with their supply-bill, are the many-shafted column which supports and gives height and true magnificence to the richly-capitalised, the gorgeously-domed edifice, which, with all its incongruities, stretches its ample and majestic roof over one of the noblest societies of freemen the world has ever witnessed.'

'But surely the Peers are the Upper, the Commons the Lower House?' remarked M. Vieuxtemps.

'In name, yes. The shadow has remained, though the substance has long since departed. The Lords' House, albeit, has still deep roots in the tenacious soil which it once overshadowed. Its historic names, vast wealth, unquestionable patriotism, and moderating influence upon the possibly too hasty speed of legislation, maintain, and will long maintain it as a virile and independent estate of the realm; but in substantive power the Houses have gradually, during the last five hundred years, changed places. I will give you an illustration of the silent revolution in this matter which has occurred. Forms with us, provided they be only forms, and in reality not injurious, are very slowly discarded. Thus it happens that when the Houses disagree with respect to changes in any measure under discussion, and mutually appoint 'managers' to meet each other and explain on both sides the reasons of disagreement, the Lords' managers, on meeting the Commons' managers, sit down with their hats on, the Commons remaining upstanding and uncovered. The Lords of course being gentlemen as well as peers, immediately the custom is vindicated, uncover, and the Commons seat themselves. Well, in a room belonging to the Peers' House where this *bizarre* ceremony had been exhibited, there were placed, or were about to be placed, last year, by desire of the Peers, three pictures by Landseer, of which the cost was a few thousand guineas. The Commons, who approach their Lordships uncovered, refused them this trifling gratification: the money was struck out of the miscellaneous estimates, and the Peers obliged to forego their pictures.'

'It did not require such an instance to convince me that your pretended monarchy is but a rampant demo-

cracy, its plebeian limbs concealed beneath ermined robes, and its truculent brow veiled by a royal diadem,' said M. Vieuxtemps.

'That, my dear sir, is a gross exaggeration, permit me to say: the aristocratic element is very powerful in this country, and the monarchical principle, as we understand and honour it, remained not only erect, but unshaken amidst the crash a year or two ago of falling thrones and dynasties.'

'The royal assent is not always given to bills in the terms you have mentioned?' said Herr von Blunderblast.

'No; there are three other forms. To an ordinary public bill the form is, "La Reine le veut" ("The Queen wills it.") To a private bill: "Soit fait comme il est d sir " ("Let it be done as desired.") To a bill embodying a petition or declaration of a *right*, as in the time of Charles the First, the form is "Soit droit fait comme il est d sir " ("Let right be done as desired.")'

'I wonder,' said M. Vieuxtemps, 'these vestiges of Norman domination should be retained: they must tend to keep alive humiliating recollections.'

'Humiliating fiddlesticks! Oliver Cromwell, to be sure, abolished them, and gave his assent to laws in plain English, but the old form came back with the Restoration; and here, by the by, is the law lord back again, and as neither of us has, I suppose, any overpowering desire to listen to further eloquence in the matter of this Chancery appeal, we had better adjourn to Bellamy's for the hour or so which will elapse before the Peers sit as legislators.'

'Bellamy's! What is Bellamy's?' asked Herr von Blunderblast.

'A highly constitutional institution connected with the House of Commons, and domiciled in the same building: in other words, a very excellent hotel, in which members take dinner, wine, punch, and refuge from long speeches, quite certain that the division-bell will summon them in time for the most important part of their duties: Bellamy's is also, I am happy to say, open to other persons, not being members, who have "money in their pouch."

After we had dined, it was time to return to the House of Lords. I had provided myself with peers' orders, and we, consequently, the House being assembled, were soon in the Strangers' Gallery, very inconveniently situated behind that of the Reporters.'

'Ah! there is the lord chancellor we saw the other day seated on the woolstack,' said M. Vieuxtemps; 'but who is that big-wigged gentleman on the crimson ottoman in front of him?'

'That is Mr Baron Parke, come, I suppose, to read a unanimous judgment of the judges of the Common-Law Courts upon some point submitted to them by their lordships. It is so: hark!'

'Do the Peers always govern themselves by this opinion?' asked Herr von Blunderblast.

'It is very rarely they do not. One exception was O'Connell's case, before mentioned, a great majority of the judges having pronounced the proceedings of the Irish court to be perfectly legal. This Mr Baron Parke, however, dissented from that opinion. When the judges are not of one mind they attend and deliver their opinions *seriatim*.'

'That is a bishop, I suppose,' remarked M. Vieuxtemps, 'on the upper bench to the right of the chancellor; but how is it he does not wear his mitre?'

'His lordship, being the junior bishop, has attended to say prayers. As to mitres, the bishops of the English established church only wear them on their coach-panels and signet-seals. That venerable-looking peer on the same side of the House, who is presenting a petition, is the president of the Council—the most Noble the Marquis of Lansdowne.' Nearly opposite to him you observe a peer of something more than fifty years of age; his eye on fire with youthful energy, and his

whole countenance alive with an expression of fearless combativeness: that is Lord Stanley, the present leader of Her Majesty's Opposition in the Peers.'

'A man of nerve,' observed M. Vieuxtemps. 'That is perceptible at a glance. But how thin the House is! and how inanimate and solemn compared with your boisterous, excited Commons!'

'There are between twenty and thirty peers present, and that is quite an average House. There is an immense difference between speaking before so sparse and unenthusiastic an audience as this and addressing the House of Commons. The reporters, however, supply their Lordships with an immense audience; and the reader of the debates little imagines that the fiery speech, interspersed with "loud cheers," "repeated cheers," was perhaps addressed to five or six elderly gentlemen only.'

'What is this interruption?' asked M. Vieuxtemps, as Sir George Grey, accompanied by several members, appeared at the bar with several bills passed by the Commons.

'It is the Home Secretary,' I answered, 'presenting, in the customary form, various bills passed by the Commons. The clerk, you perceive, takes them; their titles are announced in a loud voice; a record of their presentation is entered on the Lords' journals; and they are frequently, if public bills, read a first time at once. The Lords send their bills or messages to the Commons by two masters in Chancery.'

'Who is that peer talking privately with the lord chancellor?'

'An Irish representative peer; but I forget his name for the moment.'

'Irish representative peer—what is the meaning of that?'

'The Irish and Scottish peerages do not sit in this House individually: they choose a certain number of their order, as settled by the Acts of Union, to represent them. The Irish representative peers—twenty-eight in number—are chosen for life; the Scottish—sixteen in number—for each parliament. The Crown has power to add to the numbers of the Scotch and Irish peers in this House, but English peers Her Majesty may create *ad libitum*.'

'What, then, becomes of the independence of the House of Peers if the Queen can at any moment swamp them by new creations?' asked M. Vieuxtemps.

'The unlimited right of the Crown to create peers is one of the weapons, in the armoury of the constitution, which can never be wielded except in extreme cases, in which the ministers of the sovereign are supported by an overwhelming majority of the Commons. The only instance I remember of the creation of peers, specially for the purpose of swamping a hostile majority, was by Sir Robert Walpole, who induced the monarch to create twelve in one day for that purpose: a witty peer of that day asked them whether they intended to vote individually or by their *foreman*: nevertheless it is essential the power should be lodged in the Crown. The mere menace of exercising it dissipated, a few years ago, a very great danger to the state.'

'Who is that stooping, white-headed gentleman, whom everybody greets and shakes hands with? I cannot see his face.'

'If you had seen it, you would not have asked the question: that is the world-famous Duke of Wellington. He seats himself, you perceive, on one of the cross-benches, and he has, I daresay, fifty or sixty proxies in his pocket, to be used as unto him seemeth fit. He exercises a vast moral influence in this House; but since the death of Sir Robert Peel, in whose legislative wisdom he appears to have placed implicit confidence, he has meddled very little with active politics.'

'The debate is very gentlemanly,' observed Herr von Blunderblast; 'very courteous, and strangely dull.

The Peers fight with the gloves on—to borrow an illustration from one of your national sports—whilst the Commons appeared to strike with mailed hands, and draw blood at every stroke.'

'Yes; and see, decorous and gentle as it has been, it is already over: the House is about to adjourn, and we must begone.'

'Well, gentlemen, how say you—have I redeemed my pledge? Is a free constitution compatible with a great monarchy, M. Vieuxtemps?'

'Well, perhaps; *mais*—— A shrug of the shoulders completed and pointed the sentence.

'And you, Herr von Blunderblast, are you satisfied that an effective military system can coexist with the supremacy of a representative government?'

'Yes—that is, if it hath grown up during centuries, and entwined itself with the habits, traditions, manners, thoughts—with the life of the people, as it were, the humblest as well as the highest—but the thing I see can no more be made, manufactured, than a tree can.'

'It is certainly a wonderful piece of mosaic,' said M. Vieuxtemps.

'And it built, you will admit, the Crystal Palace?'

'Yes, in a certain sense; *mais*——' said M. Vieuxtemps.

'There is a great deal of truth in that,' remarked Herr von Blunderblast simultaneously with M. Vieuxtemps; '*aber*——'

'Charing Cross! Bank!' shouted the conductor of an omnibus just passing. This invitation, reinforced by a few sharp drops of rain, drew us into the 'bus, and the discussion of M. Vieuxtemps's '*mais*,' and Herr von Blunderblast's '*aber*,' was by tacit consent postponed *sine die*.

SLAVE-MARKET OF NEW ORLEANS.

THE town or city of New Orleans has several particular races in it, speaking different languages, and living in separate parts of the town. One class speak French, have French manners, French-built houses, French hotels, and French names to their streets. Another class invariably speak English, and are either from England, or originally of English families. Then we have the working black population (or slaves) of the African race. Most of them are quite black, with the flat nose, thick lip, and the woolly hair peculiar to this people. The climate agrees with them, and they invariably look fine, healthy, happy, strong creatures. They are all born in America, but of real African blood. Many are sold here every day—sometimes hundreds change hands in a few hours. To a Briton the sight is of course repulsive. But such is the state of things here, that you must keep perfectly quiet, and make no remarks, or else you are sure to get into trouble; for most persons, male and female, consider that they have a perfect right to act according to the laws of these western states, and buy and sell men, women, and children as they think proper.

When a young man is called up on the auction-platform, he looks about him, and does not appear to care much. Perhaps he may not have been very well pleased with his late master, and thinks he may get a better.

'Come along, my fine young fellow!' says Mr Beard, a short, thick man, with a red face—the best auctioneer here. 'That's it! Why, my friends, you can see at once that he is as powerful as an elephant, and as active and quick as an Arabian. What's your name, my fine fellow?'

'Samson, sir.' (They never have any surname.)

'Now, gentlemen, how much shall I say for this fine-grown, healthy, powerful young man, Samson? Excellent name for him—descriptive of his qualities. Now, gentlemen, give me a bid—a bid—a bid!' '500 dollars.' 'Thank you—500 dollars only is bid for one of the finest men I ever sold. Youth, health, power, and

character, all in his favour. I assure you, gentlemen, that he is worth 1200 dollars at this present moment. Look at his build, limbs, chest, carriage! 600 dollars now bid—600—600—600! Double it, my friends; come—come! '650.' 'Thank you; 650—650!' '750.' 'Now, that is more creditable.' '800.' '800 bid; 900—900; now, my friends! Gentlemen, you will never have such a chance again—only 900! 900 once—900 twice—900—900—900!' '950.' '960.' '960—960—960!' '1000.' 'Now, gentlemen, 1000 only is bid for this valuable, splendid young man, free from all blemish, disease, or vice, as prescribed by law. Now, gentlemen, are you all done? Surely not letting him go at this price! However, I cannot wait. Are you all done, gentlemen? 1000 once—1000 twice—1000 thrice! Mr Jefferson, he's yours! Samson, there's your master! and poor Samson is led away to misery or comfort, to ill usage or to kind treatment, just as it may happen. No help for him whichever it may be.

This sum was £200, a dollar being generally calculated here at four shillings. Then we had some girls and young women sold in the same way.

'Come up, Lucy! Now, gentlemen, here we have a fine specimen of everything desirable in a good servant—young, healthy, active, and industrious; can cook, wash, iron, wait at table. In fact, she is highly recommended to our attention, and is guaranteed free from all blemish, disease, or vice, as prescribed by law.' Poor Lucy was knocked down at 600 dollars—£120. These were both high prices. The men under thirty years generally sell for about £140 to £160, and the women under thirty, from £80 to £90. When above forty they are not worth more than half that price.

Such persons as the above do not care much about being sold. They are generally purchased, or at least many of them, by persons who hire them out as servants to families; and many of them have good places, and may get hired out to go to the same street, or near to where they were before. But a very different feeling is manifested at a sale of slaves belonging to a plantation. Their old master, always kind to them, may have died, or failed; and to see fifty or sixty of the slaves brought to auction is a horrible scene. All of them, old and young, may have been born on the same estate, and become endeared to one another. They think of the happy plantations, the snug little wooden whitewashed cottages surrounding their master's dwelling and garden, the summer-evening meetings, when they played the banjo, sung their native songs, and danced their cheering reels with light feet and lighter hearts; for a negro with a good master is extremely happy: being clothed, fed, comfortably housed, and well cared for. But now they are all about to be sold, and torn from each other. They are standing in rows in the auction-mart, ready for any rude hand to examine them, feel their muscle, criticise their shape, their height, their strength, or healthy appearance, and opening their mouths with finger and thumb, inspect their teeth. A middle-aged man and woman may be seen standing together: moist are their eyes, anxiously they gaze around them—they are the picture of helplessness. They know the awful doom of separation that may be pronounced in ten minutes between them and the handsome family that cluster around them; but that doom they cannot alter or control. The sons and daughters, old enough to know what awaits them, press close together, with full eyes and still fuller hearts; while the young favourites are rejoicing, in perfect innocence, in the clothes which they are decked out in for the day, to enhance their appearance and their value; and they gaze with pleasurable amusement at the novelties of the scene, like a child at the pageantry of a funeral—the trappings of the horses, and the plumes on the hearse that bears to the grave the remains of a parent. They are at length called up; and although husband and wife go together, the

children are all taken from them, and sold into different districts; and as the mother tries to look at their retreating figures through eyes blinded with tears, she knows that in a few years they are probably fated in their turn to endure the same agony—

'And thou, my son, yet have a son foredoom'd a slave to be,
Whose mother, too, must weep o'er him the tears I weep o'er thee!'

FAREWELL!

DARK spots there are in sunny places,
Thorns on the stems of flow'rets fair,
Clouds overshadowing beauteous faces,
Young bosoms harbouring fear and care;
Mingling with tones of mirth and gladness,
We hear the dull funeral knell,
'Mid pleasure's glee the voice of sadness
Sighs mournfully, 'Farewell! farewell!

'Farewell to summer's gentle breezes,
To friendship's whispers, gentler still;
Our frames the breath of winter freezes,
Our souls are 'numbed by scorn and ill.
Farewell, once gay and fragrant flowers;
No dewdrop gilds the drooping bell;
So dried by grief, these hearts of ours
Can scarcely moan, Farewell, farewell!'

Welcome to him the smiling morrow
Who toses through the weary night;
Welcome to every child of sorrow
The joyful sound—'Behold the light!'
Then how can hearts by anguish riven,
Too sharp, too deep for song to tell,
Forbear to pant, to pine for Heaven,
Where none shall cry, 'Farewell, farewell!'

S. C.

SLOW AND RAPID COMPOSITION.

Speed in composition is a questionable advantage. Poetic history records two names which may represent the rapid and the thoughtful pen—Lope de Vega and Milton. We see one pouring out verses more rapidly than a secretary could write them; the other building up, in the watches of the dark, a few majestic lines. One leaving his treasures to be easily compressed into a single volume; the other to be spread abundantly over forty-six quartos. One gaining fifteen pounds; the other a hundred thousand ducats. One sitting at the door of his house, when the sun shone, in a coarse coat of gray cloth, and visited only by a few learned men from foreign countries; the other followed by crowds whenever he appeared, while even the children shouted after him with delight. It is only since the earth has fallen on both that the fame and the honours of the Spaniard and the Englishman have been changed. He who nearly finished a comedy before breakfast, now lies motionless in his small niche of monumental biography; and he who, long choosing, began late, is walking up and down, in his singing robes and with laurel round his head, in the cities of many lands; having his home and his welcome in every devout heart, and upon every learned tongue of the Christian world.—*Willmott's Pleasures of Literature.*

NAMES OF FLOWERS.

The flower *Dahlia* was so named from a Swedish botanist called Andrew Dahl, and should therefore never be pronounced as if it were spelt *Dailia*. *Camellia* should have both *ll's* pronounced; it was named after Jo. Kamel, a Jesuit, whose name is latinised *Camellus*. *Arbutus* should be accented on the first syllable: see Virgil's *Eclogues*.

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